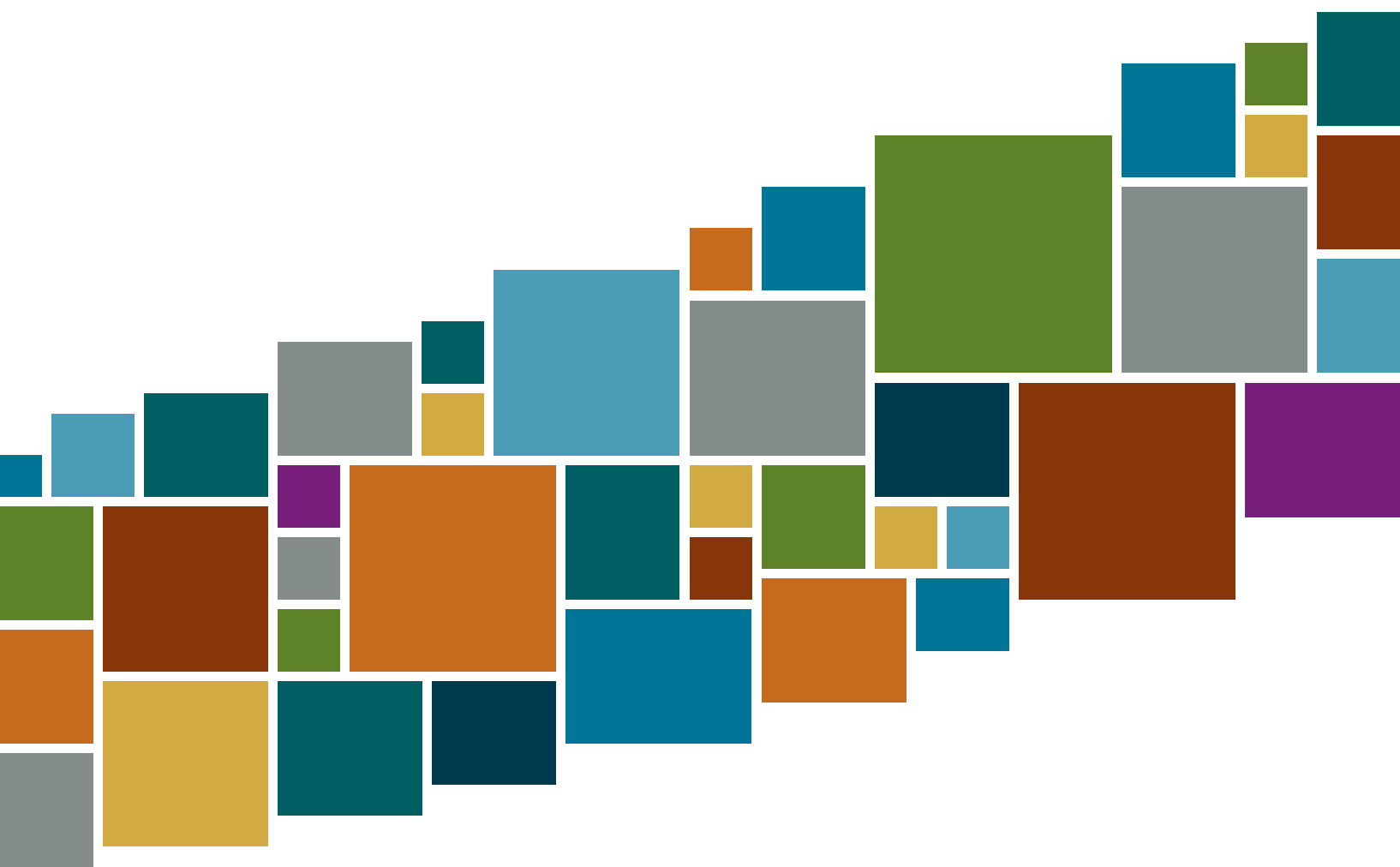


Bonjour (.) Hello

2022-2023

REPORT ON FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We recognize that Manitoba is on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk peoples.

We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis.

We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and Treaty Making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

I am pleased to present the 2022-2023 Annual Report on French-Language Services. This report lets us look back on the measures taken to contribute to the enhancement of the Francophone community through the delivery of public services in French – to see where we have been successful, and to establish where we need to work harder to ensure meaningful progress.

I am happy to use the lessons learned over the year to help us meet our government's vision of Manitoba as a truly bilingual province. By improving access to the services and programs on which our Francophone communities rely, we respect their contributions to our province and celebrate the strength of our diversity.

Respectfully submitted,

Original Signed by Glen Simard
Honourable Glen Simard
Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT	1
MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	4
GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES	5
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION	8
PROVISION OF SERVICES BASED ON ACTIVE OFFER	10
HUMAN RESOURCES AND BILINGUAL CAPACITY.....	13
CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION WITH THE FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY.....	16
CONCLUSION.....	18
APPENDIX - STATISTICS ON BILINGUAL CAPACITY	19

INTRODUCTION

The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act and Manitoba's French-Language Services (FLS) Policy provide a general framework for public bodies to guide them in the implementation of measures to improve their delivery of services in French. This annual report contains information about progress made under the multi-year strategic FLS plans and paints a picture of Manitoba's efforts to increase the vitality of its French-speaking population.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were still being felt in 2022/23, and its impact on service delivery continued to highlight challenges for FLS. The information provided by public bodies for this year's report shows that there are many ongoing obstacles that mean progress is slower than anticipated. Staff turnover is frequently cited as a reason for planned initiatives not being completed, as are administrative reorganizations. Competing priorities in certain public bodies and a lack of coordination regarding plan implementation also seem to have limited the ability to put certain action steps into practice.

A number of public bodies were more successful in overcoming difficulties and were able to advance on their proposed action steps. Their efforts demonstrate that it is possible to achieve positive outcomes for services in French, and their results can act as an example to inspire others. As was mentioned in the 2021/22 annual report on French-language services, government entities must build on the foundational work already completed to develop stronger initiatives and better results. This is why it is so important for the multi-year strategic plans to be properly evaluated – especially as the plans come to the end of their term, but also throughout their duration. Given the challenging environment public bodies often find themselves in, limited resources need to be optimized, and inefficient processes and projects modified to facilitate more successful outcomes. At least one public body has included plan evaluation as an action item in the plan itself, which is a good way to ensure this essential element is not forgotten.

2022/23 was also the year in which the 2021 census information regarding official languages was published. Statistics show that although the number of Manitobans able to speak in French has increased since 2016, the demographic weight of bilingual Manitobans has actually decreased. This is in part due to higher levels of immigration where newcomers do not speak French. Across Canada, allophone newcomers are significantly more likely to choose to learn English as their first official language rather than French (80.6 percent versus 6.1 percent). There was also a 7.4 percent decrease in the number of Manitobans declaring French to be their first official language spoken.

This data shows that work is needed if we are to ensure the ongoing vitality of Manitoba's Francophone population. It is when services in French are easily accessible and visible across the province that we can better support bilingualism. When French is used, heard, and seen in the public sphere on a regular basis, then we can start the critical task of normalizing its presence as an essential component of Manitoba's cultural identity.

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

Francophone Affairs Secretariat

The Francophone Affairs Secretariat provided regular support and advice to the minister responsible for Francophone affairs and public bodies regarding implementation of Manitoba's FLS legislation in 2022/23. All public bodies are mandated by the Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act to develop and implement multi-year strategic FLS plans. Not all plans are the same length, and so the Secretariat worked throughout the year on supporting the evaluation of plans coming to an end, as well as the development of new ones. Nine multi-year strategic FLS plans were signed, and 23 were in the process of being developed and approved in 2022/23.

Approximately 1,140 departmental employees completed the online version of the Active Offer training module available on the provincial learning management system. An additional 234 Crown employees completed the same training on the new hellobonjourmanitoba.ca web portal, while 16 employees followed an in-person training session.

The Secretariat coordinated French language training at the Alliance Française du Manitoba and the Université de Saint-Boniface for government employees. There were 242 students registered for classes in 2022/23, and a further 24 employees took part in professional development activities in French organized by the Secretariat.

Staff from the Secretariat also participated in a number of community-led working groups throughout the year. Sectors covered included justice, immigration, tourism, economic development, healthcare, and social services. This work helps the Secretariat to stay up to date on community priorities and to use its position to promote increased collaboration between public bodies and Francophone stakeholders on strategic objectives. The executive director is also a member of various steering committees, and she participated throughout the year in the evaluation of strategic plans and programs that aim to support the Francophone community. She was also invited to present to students at the University of Manitoba's Robson Hall Faculty of Law, as part of a course on language rights.

Complaints

When a complaint is submitted, the Secretariat works with the public body to hear their perspective on what happened, determine measures to improve the service, and establish procedures to ensure the same issue does not occur again. The Secretariat relies on a collaborative approach to help public bodies meet their obligations under The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act and the FLS Policy, and always reports back to the complainant to share the outcome.

The Secretariat received 37 complaints regarding French language services in 2022/23, five of which were deemed to be not admissible (they did not involve government services or programs covered by Manitoba's FLS legislation). This is a significant decrease over the previous two years (57 complaints in 2021/22; 86 complaints in 2020/21 – the first of the COVID-19 pandemic).

Most complaints concerned program areas like healthcare and social services, assessment services, communications and Crown services. Among the issues mentioned were the lack of

information in French, inadequate or non-existing French language services, and problems with translation. Specific examples include:

- automatic email responses sent in English only
- the lack of print and web information in French
- an absence of active offer for in-person reception and telephone services.

It should be noted that one public body has committed to putting in place a formal remediation planning process when complaints are made to support making changes that will resolve future issues.

FLS complaints provide government with an opportunity to learn from its shortcomings and enhance services to better respond to the Francophone community's needs. If public bodies do not know where issues exist, they cannot work to address them. This is why the Secretariat welcomes feedback from Francophones who use government services.

Anyone with a complaint about FLS can contact the Secretariat directly (fls.slf@gov.mb.ca, 204-945-4915) or through the online complaint form at https://forms.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/file_complaint.html. The Secretariat also assists the public with general questions, concerns and service requests regarding FLS.

Bilingual Service Centres

The Bilingual Service Centres (BSCs) continued to help Manitobans access a wide array of programs and services offered by all three levels of government and community organizations, in both official languages, in the following designated bilingual regions:

- Mountain (Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes)
- Red River (St-Pierre-Jolys)
- Seine River (Ste. Anne)
- Interlake (St. Laurent)
- Urban (St. Boniface/St. Vital).

The BSCs responded to 66,573 requests for service and information in 2022/23 – an increase of over 100 percent compared to the previous year (32,576 requests). Information specialists provided general information, program referrals and client support, while also undertaking various outreach activities to promote government programs and services in French.

Presentations were given on different topics, including government services in French, mental health, accessibility, and workplace training. Four centres offered a free tax declaration service for low-income clients – the percentage of these clients requesting the service in French increased from 14 percent in March 2022 to 39 percent in March 2023.

A number of new initiatives were introduced in the urban BSC. A new position was created for an outreach specialist with a mandate to offer services and information to Francophones across the city at various community sites. A total of 110 people participated in presentations held by the new specialist in Winnipeg over the autumn and winter. A new guided tour service of the Access St. Boniface building (in which the urban BSC is located) started, aimed at helping newcomers discover the wide range of government and healthcare services available in French.

Staff in rural BSCs continued to provide navigation services in French at vaccination clinics in the Interlake and Eastern Health Region. Two services originally developed as pilot projects

were made permanent: the collaboration with Environment and Climate Change Manitoba to allow Manitobans to purchase various permits and licences issued by the department in the Seine River BSC was a success, while the partnership between the Francophone Affairs Secretariat and the Manitoba Agricultural Services continued to facilitate access to agricultural services to producers in designated bilingual regions.

Finally, working together with the Société de la francophonie manitobaine (SFM) au rural, information specialists organized two career fairs, in Île-des-Chênes and La Broquerie. The team also supported the SFM au rural in organizing events for seniors in the Francophone communities of St. Malo, St. Jean-Baptiste, and St. Laurent.

Francophone Affairs Advisory Council

[The Francophone Affairs Advisory Council](#) (FAAC) met in the presence of the minister responsible for Francophone Affairs twice in 2022/23: on May 31, 2022, and on February 8, 2023. Matters discussed included a presentation of the community's strategic plan *Ensemble... vers 2035*, and an overview of initiatives underway in other Canadian jurisdictions to support services in French.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

Ministers' Council on the Canadian Francophonie

The Ministers' Council on the Canadian Francophonie (MCCF), created in 1994, is the only intergovernmental forum that brings together the ministers responsible for the Canadian Francophonie.

The Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs attended the June 2022 annual MCCF meeting in Regina, Saskatchewan, accompanied by the executive director of the Francophone Affairs Secretariat. Ministers discussed how to promote the added value of bilingualism and the Canadian Francophonie in the economic development sector and continued their reflection on how to best support Francophone immigration. The ongoing shortage of qualified bilingual workers was another subject debated by the ministers. Finally, they all committed to develop and implement additional online information and services in French, promising to provide one another with updates on their progress at their 2024 meeting.

Intergovernmental Network of the Canadian Francophonie

The executive director of the Francophone Affairs Secretariat represented Manitoba at two in-person meetings of the Intergovernmental Network of the Canadian Francophonie (INCF) in 2022/23 – in Regina (Saskatchewan) and St. John's (Newfoundland-and-Labrador). This group is charged with carrying out follow-up activities to implement priorities of the MCCF and preparing for the next edition of the conference. There were also multiple video conferences held throughout the year. The Secretariat's executive director continued to chair the French-Language Services Committee and, along with her Ontario counterpart, continued the work to create a national portrait on the unmet needs for a bilingual workforce. This included meetings with Employment and Social Development Canada and the Labour Market Information Council. The report was shared with ministers at their annual meeting, and Manitoba also presented a report on best practices related to online government services in French at the same event.

The executive director also attended two national conferences in Ottawa during the year – one on Francophone economic development and the other on Francophone immigration.

FPT Working Group on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages

The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages met in Ottawa in March 2023. This was the first time the group had met in person since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretariat's executive director represented the Manitoba government at the meeting, during which the lack of qualified bilingual professionals was discussed, as well as a proposed plan to hold a national summit on access to justice in 2025/26.

Canada–Manitoba Agreement on French-Language Services 2018-2023

The Francophone Affairs Secretariat administered funding under the 2018-2023 Canada–Manitoba Agreement on French-Language Services (CMAFLS). Under this cost-sharing

arrangement, the federal government matches the Manitoba government's expenditure up to a maximum of \$1.4 million per year (\$7 million over five years) to support the development, delivery and expansion of quality government services in French, and to support foundational initiatives that enhance the community's vitality. The agreement supported a wide variety of projects in 2022/23, including in the priority sectors of healthcare and social services, early childhood, Francophone immigration, municipal services, economic development and tourism, and culture. Funds from the CMAFLS also supported language learning for public servants, translation initiatives and the operation of the BSCs.

Manitoba–New Brunswick and Manitoba–Quebec

The Francophone Affairs Secretariat negotiated, on Manitoba's behalf, the projects to be funded in 2022/23 under the Agreement for Cooperation and Exchange between the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Quebec with Respect to the Francophonie, and the Memorandum of Understanding on Interprovincial Cooperation between the Governments of Manitoba and New Brunswick. Manitoba contributed a total of over \$11,300 toward two Manitoba–Quebec projects and \$20,000 toward six Manitoba–New Brunswick projects, with matched funding from its counterparts. This funding allowed community organizations to benefit from exchanges, mentoring, training and sharing of expertise in the fields of arts and culture, early childhood education, and minority official language community development and governance.

Ronald-Duhamel Award

The Prix Ronald-Duhamel – Ronald Duhamel Award is a joint initiative of the Société de la francophonie manitobaine (SFM), Manitoba's Federal Network of Official Languages, the Francophone Affairs Secretariat, and the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM). It is presented every two years. Officially launched in March 2005, the award was created to recognize an employee or group of employees of a government or quasi-governmental body at the federal, provincial or municipal level for distinguished service to Manitoba's Francophone community.

The call for nominations for the next edition of the Prix Ronald-Duhamel – Ronald Duhamel Award was launched in the fall of 2022, with the recipient to be named in the spring 2023.

Members of the general public and public sector employees at the federal, provincial and municipal level are invited to submit nominations for the award. Additional information is available online at www.prixronaldduhamelaward.mb.ca

PROVISION OF SERVICES BASED ON ACTIVE OFFER

As one of the four principles of the Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act, the active offer concept guides Manitoba's provision of French language services. All multi-year strategic FLS plans must include action steps based on this concept. The provision of services can further be broken down into three categories:

- Internal FLS Policies, Governance and Resources
- FLS Training and Awareness
- Client Services

Internal FLS Policies, Governance and Resources

This category examines how public bodies integrate and try to normalize services in French as part of their regular operations. Many public bodies have used their plans to develop internal procedures to enhance their implementation of Manitoba's FLS Policy. This can include policies related to bilingual communications and translation, staffing, or evaluation. Public bodies have also included measures related to their FLS committees and coordinators in an effort to ensure the sustainability of the governance structure on which their plan implementation depends.

Forty-three percent of actions related to policies and procedures earmarked for completion during the year were on target, with 30 percent requiring urgent action. Administrative reorganization, as in previous years, seemed to pose challenges for implementing this type of measure. The efforts of public bodies to complete action items related to FLS coordination were more successful, however – 64 percent of planned measures were on target and only nine percent had seen little or no work done.

If we are to ensure progress in our delivery of services in French, we need to make sure that we have all the necessary foundational pieces in place. Policies and guidelines are essential tools in the development of an environment where FLS are seen as a regular element of an entity's operations. Governance should ideally be at an executive level. A top-down approach produces positive results when the delivery of FLS is seen no longer just as an obligation but as an integral part of a public body's service culture. In one agency, for example, the chief executive includes FLS planning as a standing item at staff meetings.

The annual report for 2021/22 noted how one public body had assumed a working group approach to implementation of its strategic FLS plan. This year, a second public body adopted a similar model. Its strategic plan is supported by a work plan including specific outcomes and responsibilities to ensure accountability. A department has created a work plan for its FLS committee: the plan and the associated progress tracker are both easily available to internal staff on a Teams channel. A newly created department actively reached out to other public bodies working in a similar program area to see which existing best practices could be adopted as it prepared its FLS plan. The idea of information-sharing at this level is to be encouraged, especially for smaller public bodies where resources are an issue. This approach has been used successfully by a number of Crown organizations whose FLS coordinators now meet regularly to exchange ideas.

Another agency now has clear guidelines obliging all third-party service providers to respect FSL obligations thanks to language clauses in the funding agreements. Finally, one public body

continued its work designating service agencies under its internal policy, with four additional organizations being designated as bilingual.

FLS Training and Awareness

There are two distinct components to FLS training – raising awareness among public servants about Manitoba’s obligations when it comes to services in French and support to the Francophone community, on the one hand, and providing active offer training so that staff know what they must do to ensure that Francophones are comfortable requesting their services in French on the other hand. This training should not be perceived as something that only affects bilingual employees or those in front-line positions in designated bilingual regions. All government employees should know what steps need to be taken to provide service in French, even when they do not speak the language themselves. Similarly, the more aware executive leadership is of FLS requirements and considerations, the easier it becomes to change the culture in favour of normalizing services in French.

In 2022/23, most action steps aimed at raising awareness of Manitoba’s FLS legislation were on track, with 67 percent of measures aimed at new employees being completed. This is a significant improvement over 2021/22, when barely one fifth of measures was successfully implemented. The results for active offer training were not as strong, however, since an average of only 38 percent of training initiatives (for both new and current employees) were on target.

There were some positive examples of successful implementation, however. One department noted that the active offer training module had been integrated to the obligatory onboarding process for all new staff, while another had included completion of the training as a key performance measure in its overall strategic planning. As a result, the completion rate jumped from 21 percent to 63 percent in one year. This same department has also made the active offer module obligatory for all new hires. One of Manitoba’s Crown organizations noted that including FLS awareness training as a key performance measure and assigning the lead responsibility to its executive has led to a 100 percent completion rate. Other public bodies reported on how a growing number of staff has now completed the training; rates of 70 percent and 81 percent were shared – this is particularly impressive given the relatively high rates of staff turnover in the past few years. A Crown organization has continued to insist on completion of the Active Offer module as a condition of employment.

Through its ‘mystery shopper’ process, one Crown organization was able to see a significant improvement in the level of active offer provided by its frontline staff located in designated bilingual worksites, from 16 percent in 2021/22 to 65 percent in 2022/23.

Client Services

All transactions between Francophones and public bodies can be assessed through the client services lens. Whether someone is looking for information on a website, attending an open house meeting, filling out a form, appealing before a tribunal, contacting a call centre, accessing a program online or responding to a survey, to be served in the official language of choice is key. We have seen that the creation of an environment in which Francophones can expect to receive services in French depends on awareness of language rights and obligations, and a governance structure that promotes equal access to information and programs in English and in French. If FLS policies and guidelines provide the foundation that supports Manitoba’s ability to

offer services in French, then client services are the next essential element in constructing a bilingual public service.

The majority of action steps related to Hello-Bonjour identifiers (badges, lanyards, countertop signs, etc.) were on-target in 2022/23 (67 percent), but public bodies reported challenges in implementing all other measures associated with frontline services. Thirty-three percent of measures aimed at supporting in person, telephone and written services were completed, as well as 32 percent of initiatives targeting bilingual websites. In 2021/22, the implementation rate was 53 percent and 33 percent respectively. Sixty-five percent of bilingual signage action steps required urgent attention, compared to 57 percent in the previous year. Work related to ensuring the availability of bilingual documents, forms and public information showed a slight improvement (48 percent completed in 2022/23; 45 percent completed in 201/22).

Various reasons were provided to explain the lack of obvious progress. Consistently high vacancy rates over the past few years have led to a shortage of resources for coordinating bilingual website publications, and frequent staffing changes often result in the loss of momentum for certain initiatives. Frequent administrative changes in certain sectors mean that it is difficult to ensure building signage is updated, let alone made available in bilingual format. The Secretariat will continue to work with public bodies on trying to find sustainable solutions to these recurrent issues.

Of course, there are success stories. One department was pleased to report that 90 percent of its web pages are now available in both official languages, and another noted that 98 percent of all web updates in 2022/23 were posted in English and in French simultaneously. For one Crown organization, 90 percent of all its new website content is uploaded in French on the same day as the English – as it heads toward simultaneous publication, this is excellent progress. One entity undertook a formal review of all its online information to establish where French versions had not been updated to match the English. A Crown organization introduced a QR code on its English-language newsletter linking to the French version as a means of promoting its French-language documents. This is a relatively simple way to let the public know that information is also available in French. Many public bodies do not have mechanisms in place to easily identify French-speaking clients, so the ability to access French versions of documents through a QR code is an interesting alternative for texts that are too long to be published in a dual bilingual format.

The use of French for social media activities also saw some progress in 2022/23. One of the health authorities noted that 38 percent of its posts were bilingual – an increase from six percent the previous year. Blog views for a Crown organization's French posts almost doubled (from 7,413 views in 2021/22 to 14,514 views in 2022/23) as its production increased from 130 posts to 249 posts, and its website views in French went from 40,822 to 54,474. Another Crown agency has created an online knowledge base for clients seeking answers to standard questions on its customer portal – all 24 videos are bilingual.

A Crown organization conducted a full-scale walk-through of its application process to identify potential barriers for Francophone applicants. The first phase of this initiative was completed this year, allowing it to identify issues and to formulate possible solutions. The revised process will then be implemented in the hope that more Francophones will apply to its programs in French. The organization also looked at ways to use technology to enhance analysis of French-language applications and better collate data on Francophone clients.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND BILINGUAL CAPACITY

Bilingual Capacity

All public bodies have elements in their multi-year strategic FLS plans to ensure the necessary human resources are in place to support the implementation of their services in French. For many of them, this work starts with establishing inventories of designated bilingual positions and bilingual capacity in non-designated positions. Many bodies seemed to struggle to meet their targets in 2022/23: only 38 percent of actions steps related to designated bilingual position inventories were on track, with 45 percent of action steps related to inventories of bilingual capacity being on track. This was a significant decrease compared to the previous year (56 percent and 72 percent respectively). For many public bodies vacancies, administrative reorganizations and staff turnover in coordinator positions made this work particularly challenging. One public body, however, made efforts to ensure that bilingual designations are included in its new human resource management system to facilitate tracking.

The next step in assessing capacity is to review positions to see if transfers or additions need to be made to better support service delivery. Given how much the programs have changed and how organizational structures have been modified over the course of the past few years, this is a useful initiative that should be performed on a regular basis. There was an improvement over 2021/22, with 35 percent of planned action steps being completed or on target (against 25 percent).

There is still room for more progress to be made, especially if public bodies integrate these types of language-ability review into their general strategic human resource planning processes. This will ensure that due consideration is given to public bodies' requirement to offer services in both official languages and that plans can be made to support the staffing needed to do so. It is only when a department or government agency develops significant bilingual capacity that it can enhance its provision of services in French.

Recruitment and Retention

Strategies to support recruitment of bilingual employees should be based on a clear understanding of existing capacity, and most public bodies have action steps related to the hiring process in their plans. The simplest way to achieve this objective is by adding bilingualism to all job postings as a preferred criterion. Of the 19 associated measures contained in public bodies' plans, 26 percent were completed or on track in 2022/23. This is a slight improvement to 2021/22, when only 21 percent of action steps were on target. As in previous years, a number of reasons were provided for the lack of progress, including the belief that mentioning bilingualism in a job ad will discourage qualified candidates from applying or the idea that only front-line positions really benefit from having a bilingual incumbent. Neither reason is necessarily justifiable. There is no proof that adding bilingualism as an asset has a negative impact on the number of applicants for any particular position, and it is just as important for a Francophone lens to be applied by managers and program specialists as it is for frontline services to be offered in French. Another reason provided is that public bodies are told to give priority to employment equity candidates for designated bilingual positions. While this may be the case, it does not make sense to add this additional condition to positions that are already hard to fill. That said, a few public bodies did introduce or maintain policies to have bilingualism as an asset

on all job postings. It will be interesting to see how many of those competitions ended up with the public body hiring a bilingual candidate, to see if this initiative is producing positive results for building bilingual capacity.

Only 32 percent of the 35 action steps related to the recruitment of bilingual employees were on target. This is a decrease from the 41 percent of measures on target in 2021/22. Increased sharing of best practices would undoubtedly support public bodies as they try to implement initiatives to increase their capacity to provide services in both official languages. One Crown organization, for example, started using a bilingual ad on LinkedIn to promote career opportunities. While it was not necessarily looking to fill designated bilingual positions with this posting, the fact that it appeared in both languages demonstrates that bilingualism is appreciated and – potentially – an asset for interested candidates.

There are still workforce shortages across the country, and the public sector is not always seen as the first choice for employment by recent graduates and the younger generation of jobseekers. The situation is even more complicated when looking for bilingual staff. Previous annual reports have spoken to the need for public bodies need to start developing strategies not only to attract bilingual staff, but also to keep them. There were only two measures in 2022/23 regarding retention – one was on target, the other required monitoring. One department issued a survey to branches regarding their experiences delivering services in French. There were questions about the challenges faced, learning needs and obstacles, and the department plans on using the results to inform future activities.

A Crown organization issued a request for proposals to procure customized proficiency assessment services. It will be interesting to see the results of this approach in the next year. Establishing a standardized competence assessment tool that could be used by all public bodies might remove some of the uncertainty from the hiring process. The ability to tell candidates the exact level of French required for various positions – and whether it is just oral French skills that are needed, or written competences too – would help both human resource practitioners with the government and those applying for jobs have a better sense of what is required (and how these competences are tested).

The ongoing challenges with recruitment have led to a higher number of designated bilingual positions not being filled with a bilingual incumbent. There was a slight improvement in the vacancy rate over the previous year (12 percent in 2022/23 compared to 14 percent in 2021/22). The number of designated positions filled with non-bilingual incumbents was just over 12.5 percent. More details can be found in the Appendix.

It has been noted in other years that vacancy rates of over ten percent create additional problems. Not only is it harder for public bodies to provide services in French, but it is also more difficult to ensure the ongoing application of a Francophone lens at the managerial or even executive level, as there are not enough experienced internal candidates speaking both official languages to be considered for promotion. The use of bilingual student interns is a potential way to address this problem – one health authority was able to provide 24 student placements in 2022/23.

Training

Many public bodies have included training initiatives in their plans for 2022/23, but they were not as successful putting them in place as was the case in 2021/22 (56 percent on-target this year versus 63 percent on target the previous year). There was a similar drop in the percentage of on-target action steps related to the implementation of strategies to promote and encourage French-language training among bilingual staff – 61 percent versus 66 percent. Given how difficult it is to recruit bilingual employees, it is important that public bodies do more to ensure they have the tools they need to be able to offer comparable services in French.

One department introduced new informal classes for bilingual staff. Facilitated by a professional instructor, the sessions take place during regular work hours and at the work site. A Crown organization developed in-house professional development activities – 50 percent of its employees participated in at least one of the four sessions offered. Another Crown organization increased its promotion of French-language learning opportunities available and saw a corresponding increase in the number of employee registrations. The health authorities continue to explore the use of Rosetta Stone as an innovative way to support language learning, and one health authority has started a review of its underfill process (for when a qualified bilingual candidate cannot be found for certain hard-to-fill positions) with a view to developing targeted tools and resources to help underfill incumbents meet all the position criteria.

Depending on the type of work they do and where they are located in the province, many incumbents in designated bilingual positions receive very few requests for service in French. To help them maintain their competence and confidence, public bodies need to determine the supports required – formal or informal language learning, resources and lexicons, online or in-person conversation groups, etc. If employees are not using French on a regular basis, they may become increasingly uncomfortable providing service in that language. This is particularly true for bilingual Anglophones, whose level of linguistic insecurity are often higher than those of their colleagues who have French as a first language.

CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION WITH THE FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY

Consultation

Consultation activities increased slightly, as the pandemic restrictions were coming to an end in 2022/23. Of the 55 proposed action steps found in public bodies' FLS plans, 42 percent were on track (compared to 35 % in 2021/22). However, 45 percent of measures required urgent attention.

A growing number of departments are using Engage MB, the government's online portal, for their consultation activities. There has been some progress in publishing bilingual surveys without too great a lapse between the launch of the English and then the French versions, although a more concerted effort could be made to aim for simultaneous publications. The Secretariat appreciates the efforts to ensure bilingual surveys, but there is a danger that some public bodies will see this as a replacement to consulting directly with French-speaking Manitobans. The objective behind consultation is to discover the specific needs and priorities of the community so that a Francophone lens can be applied during the development of programs, services, and policies. In cases where French answers to survey questions are translated into English so they can be collated with the majority response, it is possible that nuances of information that is particularly relevant for Francophones (rather than for the majority Anglophone population) are lost. To gain a deeper understanding of how certain decisions directly impact Francophones, it would be better to create targeted surveys specifically aimed at the Francophone community to get their perspective.

An even more effective tool is to organize in-person consultations, either with community organizations and stakeholders or with members of the public. Here, too, it is not simply a question of providing interpretation services to facilitate communication, although this is often an essential service. Depending on the nature of the consultation, public bodies might sometimes want to establish French-specific sessions to get feedback from Francophones on those elements that are relevant for them as service users. This ensures that the unique needs of the community are taken into consideration within the larger portrait of Manitoban responses and that a Francophone lens can be applied to policy and program development.

One Crown organization partnered with a federal organization to conduct consultations with Francophones. When resources are limited, seeking out partnerships with other entities – especially at the national level – is a good way to ensure that the important work of determining if programs and services are meeting the needs of clients can go ahead.

Collaboration With the Francophone Community

Action steps to improve collaboration with the Francophone community can be found in the multi-year strategic plans of most public bodies, and this is considered a government priority. Of the 51 proposed measures for 2022/23, 55 percent were completed or on target. This is a significant increase over 2021/22, when just 31 percent were on target and is almost a return to the completion levels of 2018/19 – the first year when all public bodies were implementing their mandated FLS plans. In that year, 64 percent of action steps were on target.

Manitoba's Francophone community is lucky to have a wide range of organizations providing services in French in many different sectors. One public body identified 16 Francophone organizations that are not among its clients but with whom it plans to collaborate to better

understand community needs. While it is not always feasible for them to provide services on the government's behalf, there are opportunities for collaboration in a number of program areas, and formal service agreements are a good tool to support collaboration. Operating and project grants are another way to promote a more collaborative approach. In 2022/23, there were 14 action steps related to financial support for the community, and 79 percent of them were on track. This contrasts to the excellent results in 2021/22, when 100 percent of activities were on track or only slightly delayed.

Collaboration with the community provides public bodies with an opportunity to facilitate access to their services in a way that is more adapted to the specific needs of Francophones. It is also frequently more effective, because community organizations tend to have a closer relationship with their clients and are often more aware of their service requirements. This is why it is so important for public bodies to consult with the community and to get a more complete understanding of the needs and priorities of Francophones. This in turn allows them to judge when it is more appropriate and efficient to collaborate with or even to delegate service delivery to a community organization. One public body made concrete efforts throughout 2022/23 to increase collaboration with a community stakeholder. It was therefore able to develop recruitment initiatives, undertake a targeted needs analysis, and get support with French-language communications and media interviews.

Cooperation With the Bilingual Service Centres

There were 18 action steps regarding cooperation with the BSCs in public bodies' FLS plans, of which approximately 28 percent were on target. While still low, this is a significant improvement over the statistics for the previous year, when only six percent of the proposed measures were implemented. The progress is certainly linked to the end of the pandemic restrictions on in-person services that impacted results in the previous two years.

There is clearly still room for progress to be made on how public bodies work with the BSCs. This access to government centres with fully bilingual staff whose explicit mandate is to support access to services and information in French could be used by departments and other government agencies as an additional tool to enhance the provision of FLS, especially by those program areas with limited bilingual capacity. More work needs to be done to inform public bodies about potential areas for collaboration, particularly with those entities that do not engage directly with the public on a regular basis. Public bodies that have a long-established relationship with the BSCs could be used as models to promote the advantages of formal cooperation and to increase awareness of the possibilities.

Departments could use the BSCs as an itinerant workspace for staff undertaking outreach activities, for example, or to house French-speaking staff on a full-time basis in designated bilingual regions. Service agreements could be developed to facilitate online services – for example, Francophone clients could be in one of the centres and have computer access to meet virtually with bilingual government representatives wherever they may be found in the province. Information agents from the centres can support program delivery by offering workshops to target specific Francophone clienteles – seniors, newcomers or youth.

CONCLUSION

2022/23 was a year that had its fair share of challenges for the successful implementation of public bodies' multi-year strategic FLS plans. While many sectors of activity saw a decrease in the percentage of on-target initiatives, however, this is perhaps the inevitable result of government agencies having implemented the 'easier' elements of their plans in the first three to four years. As plans come to a term or are renewed, the remaining action steps are more difficult to implement – particularly given the ongoing lack of human resources.

The fact that there were still some strong examples of progress is encouraging. A few public bodies are now concentrating on more strategic ideas that go beyond the transactional measures that were the earlier focus. For example, in the education sector, a province-wide strategy to recruit and retain French-speaking teachers is a key plan objective, as is the development of a renewed policy on immersion education. The obligation to consider the needs of Francophone families under a bilateral funding agreement with the federal government is also included as an FLS plan component.

The delivery of healthcare services in French has also seen a similar, more strategic approach. A new unit within the provincial health authority was created in 2022/23. The office is seen as a leadership enabler when it comes to ensuring the needs of Francophones are considered – including at the clinical services level. A couple of departments have embarked on the Living Lab planning concept as they developed new FLS plans, and they should be able to start reporting on their progress over the next couple of years.

Public bodies need to aspire to do more than simply meet the most basic plan requirements indicated in the Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act. Many of them have recognized where there are gaps in service or challenges to finding resources and should now take the next step of exploring potential improvements. Creative and collaborative solutions can often be found to systemic problems, and we should always be open to employing innovative ideas whenever possible. Public bodies that have been particularly successful in meeting their plan objectives and have seen positive results can share their experiences with FLS coordinators for other government entities, developing a community of practice that supports efforts to enhance services in French.

It is true that small things can make big differences. One Crown corporation wanted to ensure that community artists were adequately represented in its materials. This vision has led to 25 percent of the featured groups and individuals being Francophone. A simple way to promote the cultural impact of French-speaking Manitobans and demonstrate consideration for the Francophonie across the province.

APPENDIX - STATISTICS ON BILINGUAL CAPACITY

Table One - Departments

Public Body	Designated bilingual positions	Designated bilingual positions filled with bilingual incumbents	Designated bilingual positions filled with non-bilingual incumbents	Vacant designated positions	Non-designated positions filled with bilingual incumbents	Total bilingual capacity 2022/23	Total bilingual capacity 2021/22
Advanced Education and Training	7	5	1	1	12	17	30
Agriculture	3	0	2	1	9	9	12
Consumer Protection and Government Services	21	14	5	2	7	21	15
Economic Development, Investment and Trade	22	7	4	11	25	32	25
Education and Early Childhood Learning	88	79	2	7	8	96	83
Environment and Climate	8	3	2	2	12	14	15
Families	88	69	6	13	59	128	126
Finance	9	8	0	1	19	27	35
Francophone Affairs Secretariat	29	26	0	3	0	26	22
Health	6	3	0	3	27	30	18
Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations	0	0	0	0	3	3	4
Justice	70	61	0	9	119	180	178
Labour and Immigration	4	4	0	0	10	14	-
Mental Health and Community Wellness	0	0	0	0	5	5	-
Municipal Relations	15	9	3	3	8	17	14
Natural Resources and Northern Development	3	1	1	1	11	12	Unknown
Public Service Commission	11	6	4	1	12	18	20
Sport, Culture and Heritage	12	8	2	2	8	16	17
Transportation and Infrastructure	3	2	0	1	32	34	33
Subtotal	399	305	32	61	386	701	647

Table Two – Crown Corporations, Offices of the Legislative Assembly and Extra-departmental Agencies

Public Body	Designated bilingual positions	Designated bilingual positions filled with bilingual incumbents	Designated bilingual positions filled with non-bilingual incumbents	Vacant designated positions	Non-designated positions filled with bilingual incumbents	Total bilingual capacity 2022/23	Total bilingual capacity 2021/22
Auditor General	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
CancerCare	1	0	0	1	18	18	28
Efficiency Manitoba	0	0	0	0	4	4	4
Elections Manitoba	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba	5	2	1	2	3	5	5
Manitoba Advocate for Children & Youth	0	0	0	0	6	6	6
Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation	5	4	1	0	7	11	12
Manitoba Arts Council	3	3	0	0	4	7	6
Manitoba Film and Music	2	0	1	1	5	5	4
Manitoba Hydro	18	15	0	3	11 ¹	26	294
Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation	164	141	17	6	45	186	183
Manitoba Ombudsman	2	1	1	0	8	9	9
Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation	88	60	18	10	39	99	108
Shared Health	58	37	21	9	2	39	50
Sport Manitoba	6	3	3	0	5	8	9
Status of Women	2	0	2	0	1	1	4
Travel Manitoba	5	4	0	1	2	6	5
Workers' Compensation Board	6	6	0	0	27	33	30
Subtotal	365	276	65	33	191	467	761
Total	764	581	97	94	577	1,168	1,408

¹ Methodology change in counting bilingual staff in non-designated positions in 2022/23 due to perceived privacy concerns.

2022/23 saw another significant number of departmental reorganizations that made it difficult to compare statistics to those reported in 2021/22. Furthermore, one Crown organization stopped providing complete information about bilingual staff occupying non-designated positions due to concerns raised about privacy (it was felt that management did not have the right to ask staff if they were bilingual if this was not a position requirement). Tracking bilingual capacity again proved to be challenging this year. Designated bilingual positions are tracked in SAP, but even these numbers are not completely reliable due to manual processes associated with administrative reorganizations. The Secretariat will continue to work with the Public Service Commission on finding ways to streamline tracking of designated bilingual positions to support the work of FLS coordinators charged with reporting this information on a yearly basis.

As was the case in the previous reporting year, the total number of designated bilingual positions rose slightly: there was an increase of almost four percent. Crown corporations and other reporting agencies account for all the new positions – the number of designated bilingual positions within core government actually fell by one percent. There was an increase of two and a half percent in the number of designated positions occupied by a bilingual incumbent, but the number of vacant positions increased by over 50 percent compared to the previous year. There are potentially a number of reasons for this, including the lack of qualified bilingual staff for certain positions and a general vacancy rate across government (regardless of designated status) that was particularly high. The overall bilingual capacity decreased by 17 percent. However, these figures do not provide an accurate reflection of the real capacity due to the challenges mentioned above.

The statistics for 2022/23, while encouraging when it comes to the increase in designated bilingual positions, demonstrate that there is still work to be done regarding recruitment and retention strategies for employees who are able to speak both official languages.

Table Three – Regional Health Authorities

NOTE: The regional health authorities do not have a uniform method of tracking bilingual capacity, with some using the number of positions and others the number of full-time equivalents (FTE). It is therefore impossible to compare this data to that of other public bodies.

Public Body	Number of designated bilingual positions	Number of designated bilingual positions filled with bilingual incumbents	Number of designated bilingual positions filled with non-bilingual incumbents	Number of vacant designated positions	Number of non-designated positions filled with bilingual incumbents	Total Bilingual capacity 2022/23	Total bilingual capacity 2021/22
Interlake-Eastern	47 32.72 (FTE)	13 9.80 (FTE)	33 21.92 (FTE)	1 1.0 (FTE)	105 79.37 (FTE)	118 89.17 (FTE)	118 84.34 (FTE)
Prairie Mountain	5	3	2	0	19	22	25
Southern Health	516	233	187	91	50	420	392
Winnipeg	941.36 (FTE)	409.09 (FTE)	532.27 (FTE)	15.9 (FTE)	Unknown ²	416.49 (FTE)	467.24 (FTE)

While data reported by the four designated bilingual health authorities for 2022/23 continues to show a high number of designated positions occupied by non-bilingual incumbents (an average of 50 percent), this is a two percent drop over the year before. However, it is still clear that it is very difficult to find candidates who possess both the technical and linguistic competences required for these positions. It should be noted that the largest health authority is unable to provide information about the number of non-designated bilingual positions filled with a bilingual incumbent, so these numbers do not tell the whole story about bilingual capacity in the designated health authorities.

² 2020/21 data was gathered by a AON Hewitt survey that has not been repeated since. Capacity cannot currently be tracked in SAP.